

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS  
STEVE HICKS SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

<b>Course Number:</b>	SW n381S	<b>Instructor:</b>	Starla Simmons, LCSW-S
<b>Unique Number:</b>	88200	<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:starla.simmons@utexas.edu">starla.simmons@utexas.edu</a>
<b>Semester:</b>	Summer 2025	<b>Office:</b>	WWH 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor
<b>Meeting Time/Place:</b>	M/W	<b>Office Phone:</b>	
	8:30am – 11:00am	<b>Office Hours:</b>	Mondays, 1130pm – 12:30pm
	CBA 4.336		Other times by appointment

**FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE: VALUES, DIVERSITY, POWER & OPPRESSION**

**I. STANDARDIZED COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course focuses on the origins and impacts of social, racial, economic, and environmental injustices and introduces students to actions to dismantle systems of oppression. A core emphasis is on the development of advocacy skills for diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Through self-reflection and collective learning, this course provides students with a shared language and structural analysis of racial inequity and oppression across social identities. These include race, ethnic origin, class, gender, gender identity and expression, culture, sexual orientation, religion, age, physical and mental abilities, caste, immigration/refugee status, national origin of communities and tribal sovereign status. Course materials and activities lift counternarratives to emphasize the lived experiences of marginalized populations and intersectionality. Students will understand how marginalization from the dominant culture adversely affects individuals, groups, and populations. Students will explore the social construction of whiteness and understand the power and leverage it holds within society and the social work profession, identifying the systemic impact of anti-black racism. A variety of frameworks, including, but not limited to, ecological systems theory, critical race theory, feminist theory, the strengths-based perspective, and other theories with an anti-oppressive and antiracist focus will be used to support discourse on the social construction of race, cycle of socialization, systemic oppression, and strategies for community advocacy. In a collaborative learning community, students will develop their professional use of self and explore their role in promoting social, racial, economic, and environmental justice in assessment, planning, access to resources, research, and policies. Students will have an expanded understanding of the foundations of a socially just society and learn antiracist strategies to dismantle oppressive systems.

**II. STANDARDIZED COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Engage in intentional practice to interrogate personal biases and assumptions related to intersectional identities and commit to this as a life-long process.

2. Explore the inherent power social work holds as a field and name social workers' responsibility to manage their capacity to gatekeep and create harm.
3. Analyze how various societal factors, such as capitalism, patriarchy, and ethnocentrism create and maintain structural oppression and power differentials.
4. Learn to build on and mobilize the resilience and strengths of clients and populations relegated to the margins, centering clients and populations as experts in their lived experience, to dismantle systems of oppression in social work practice.
5. Develop skills to navigate essential conversations about race and racism and incorporate antiracist principles into practice.
6. Identify and compare various historical and current social justice movements.

### **EPAS Competencies**

The Steve Hicks School of Social Work (SHS) has been continuously accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) since 1952. In order to maintain our accreditation status, the SHS engages in ongoing curriculum assessment to demonstrate compliance with CSWE's Education Policies and Accreditation Standards (EPAS).

**Using a common evaluation instrument, this course measures the implementation of knowledge, skills, values, and/or cognitive and affective processes to assess the following competencies:**

#### **Competency 2: Advance Human Rights and Social, Racial, Economic, and Environmental Justice**

Behavior 2a: Advocate for human rights at the individual, family, group, organizational, and community system levels

Behavior 2b: Engage in practices that advance human rights to promote social, racial, economic, and environmental justice

#### **Competency 3: Engage Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) in Practice**

Behavior 3a: Demonstrate anti-racist and anti-oppressive social work practice at the individual, family, group, organizational, community, research, and policy levels

Behavior 3b: Demonstrate cultural humility by applying critical reflection, self-awareness, and self-regulation to manage the influence of bias, power, privilege, and values in working with clients and constituencies, acknowledging them as experts of their own lived experiences

### **III. TEACHING METHODS**

This class will be taught using a variety of methods with an emphasis on experiential learning for the purpose of building skill and confidence. The nature of the course content requires a didactic approach as well. Therefore, PowerPoint lectures, role-plays, videos, class discussions, small group and dyad exercises, and guest speakers will all be utilized. For success in this class, you must be willing to participate, take risks and "stretch" out of your comfort zone.

You are expected to ask questions to clarify expectations, provide me with constructive feedback in a timely manner and meet with me individually as needed and/or when requested. All in-class discussions related to personal values, beliefs, or life experiences must be kept confidential.

Use of Canvas for this course: This class uses Canvas – a Web-based course management system with password-protected access at <http://canvas.utexas.edu> - for confidential communication such as posting and submitting assignments. Readings that are not in the required text, assignment guidelines and assignment grading rubrics are all posted to Canvas. Students can access Canvas Help 24/7 by calling 855- 308-2494. Students are expected to set notifications in Canvas so they receive announcements updates as soon as they are posted. **If anything is getting in the way of your learning, let me know as soon as possible so we can discuss it and problem solve!**

#### IV. REQUIRED TEXT AND MATERIALS

Benner, K., Loeffler, D. N., & Pope, N. D. (2022). *Social, economic, and environmental justice: building social work practice skills*. Springer Publishing Company, LLC.

Other required readings, articles, and websites will be posted in Canvas.

#### V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

##### 1. **Common Assignment: Social Identity Map + Community Event Reflection: (25 points)**

This assignment consists of two parts:

- A. Use Jacobson and Mustafa's Social Identity Mapping Tool (2019) to create your own social identity map. (Pg. 4 of the article describes how to fill out the map.) <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1609406919870075> . Submit your map, positionality statement & reflection.
- B. Directly observe and experience communities, organization, and individuals that may be outside of your cultural norms by attending an event. Reflect on your positionality as an attendee of the event. Write a 2-to-3-page self-reflection essay.

*Specific assignment instructions and grading rubric are in Canvas.*

##### 2. **Justice Analysis & Seminar Facilitation (25 Points)**

Students will identify a current event or policy to analyze using a social justice lens. The event can occur at the micro, mezzo, or macro level (or across all three). Students will present a short analysis of the social issue and facilitate a 30-minute interactive activity that engages their peers in discussion. The purpose of the activity will be to inform, raise awareness, reflect, and discuss possible actions.

Specific assignment instructions and a grading rubric are in Canvas.

**3. Justice for All! A Population Impact Report (40 points).**

This assignment may be completed as an academic paper OR as presentation slide deck. You may complete this project in a group of up to 3 people. The purpose of this assignment is to take a deep dive into the strengths and needs of a specific community living under oppression in the United States. Students will choose a marginalized community and explore the historical, generational, and interpersonal dynamics that impact the population, using a strengths-based perspective. Students should use an intersectional approach in presenting data around demographics, disparities, & policies that affect the population. Examples of existing community-based leadership, programs, and practices must be included, as well as recommendations for social work practice. Presentations must be visually engaging use videos, photographs, infographics.

Specific assignment instructions and a grading rubric are in Canvas.

**4. Reading Reflection: (10 points)**

- Students will write a 2-3 page reflection on an impactful reading, podcast, or video (assigned) or one sought out independently. Reflections questions are found in Canvas.

Assignment	Points
Social Identity Map	25
Current Event Seminar	25
Population Impact Report	40
Reading Reflection	10
TOTAL Points	100

**VI. GRADES**

94.0 and Above	A
90.0 to 93.999	A-
87.0 to 89.999	B+
84.0 to 86.999	B
80.0 to 83.999	B-
77.0 to 79.999	C+
74.0 to 76.999	C
70.0 to 73.999	C-
67.0 to 69.999	D+
64.0 to 66.999	D

60.0 to 63.999  
Below 60.0

D-  
F

## VII. CLASS POLICIES

**ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION** Attendance and participation for the entire class is expected for all students. If a student is unable to attend class, please inform the Professor by email at your earliest convenience. Repeated and excessive absences will require conference with Professor, additional make-up work if necessary, and possible loss of points. Classroom exercises, discussions, role-plays, guest speakers and other class experiential exercises are essential for the students' professional learning and continued development of self-awareness. This form of learning cannot be "made up" once missed. Students will be expected to contact their peers to secure any missed notes or handouts. The student may schedule an office visit with the professor if they wish to discuss missed classroom material in more detail.

**PAPERS** Students are expected to produce high quality work in terms of appearance, writing style and content. Points will be deducted for errors, misspellings, incorrect grammar, poor organization, repetition of information, and inferior word processing. When using information from other sources, references and bibliography should conform to the current APA style of citation. Students are encouraged to consult with the SSW writing consultant. Plagiarism is a serious violation of university rules and will be dealt with according to university policy.

**TIME MANAGEMENT** All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date and time indicated. **Late assignments will be penalized 5% of the total percentage points allowed per day that they are late and will only be accepted in the first week following an assignment due date. However, students will be allowed to turn one assignment in late by one day during the semester without incurring the 5% penalty.** Contact the instructor before the assignment is due if other arrangements need to be made due to an emergency. All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date and time indicated on Canvas.

**USE OF CANVAS IN CLASS** In this class the professor uses Canvas Web based course management system with password protected access at <http://canvas.utexas.edu> distribute course materials, to communicate and collaborate online, to post grades, to submit assignments, and to give students online quizzes and surveys. Students can find support in using Canvas at the ITS Help Desk. For more information go to <http://www.utexas.edu/its/helpdesk/>

**FEEDBACK** Students will be asked to provide feedback on their learning and the professor's teaching strategies in informal as well as formal ways. It is very important for the professor to know the students' reactions to what is taking place in class, ensuring that together the professor and students can create a dynamic and effective learning community. Students are encouraged to provide ongoing feedback to the instructor during class and office visits.

## VIII. UNIVERSITY POLICIES

## Grading Scale

[No A+]	87.0 to 89.999	77.0 to 79.999	C+	67.0 to 69.999	D+	
94.0 and Above	A	B	74.0 to 76.999	C*	64.0 to 66.999	D
90.0 to 93.999	A-	+	70.0 to 73.999	C-	60.0 to 63.999	D-
	84.0 to 86.999	B	<i>*minimum to pass course</i>	Below 60.0	F	
	80.0 to 83.999	B-				

**Attendance and Academic Behavior.** At the University of Texas at Austin, regular attendance at all class meetings is expected. Instructors are responsible for implementing an attendance policy and must notify students of any special attendance requirements. See more information at <https://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/academic-policies-and-procedures/attendance/>. Furthermore, students are expected to abide by the Standards for Social Work Education (available at <https://socialwork.utexas.edu/student-resources/bsw/policies-and-procedures/>). The student shows potential for responsible and accountable behavior by being punctual and dependable, prioritizing responsibilities, attending class regularly, observing deadlines, completing assignments on time, and keeping appointments or making appropriate arrangements.

**Religious Holy Days.** A student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day should inform the instructor as far in advance of the absence as possible so that arrangements can be made to complete an assignment within a reasonable period after the absence. A reasonable accommodation does not include substantial modification to academic standards, or adjustments of requirements essential to any program of instruction. Students and instructors who have questions or concerns about academic accommodations for religious observance or religious beliefs may contact the Center for Access and Restorative Engagement at <https://community.utexas.edu/care/>. The University does not maintain a list of religious holy days.

**The University of Texas Honor Code.** The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

**Policy on Academic Integrity.** Students who violate University rules on academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and / or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on academic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, please visit the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website at: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct>.

**Use of Course Materials.** The materials used in this course, including, but not limited to exams, quizzes, and homework assignments, are copyright protected works. Any unauthorized duplication of the course materials is a violation of federal law and may result in disciplinary action being taken against the student. Additionally, the sharing of

course materials without the specific, express approval of the professor may be a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty, which could result in further disciplinary action. This sharing includes, among other things, uploading class materials to websites for the purpose of distributing those materials to other current or future students.

**University Electronic Mail Student Notification.** Electronic mail (email), like postal mail, is a mechanism for official University communication to students. The University will exercise the right to send email communications to all students, and the University will expect that email communications will be received and read in a timely manner. Students can find UT Austin's policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address at <https://it.utexas.edu/policies/university-electronic-mail-student-notification-policy>.

#### **VIV. Steve Hicks School of Social Work Policies**

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**Professional Conduct and Civility in the Classroom.** The professor expects students to act as professionals in class. This means students should arrive on time for class, be prepared to participate in the class discussion, and show respect for one another's opinions. A course brings together a group of diverse individuals with various backgrounds. Students are influenced and shaped by such factors as race, ethnicity, gender, sex, physical abilities, religious and political beliefs, national origins, and sexual orientations, among others. We expect to learn from each other in an atmosphere of positive engagement and mutual respect. This atmosphere includes working intentionally to recognize and dismantle racism, sexism, heterosexism, and ableism in the classroom. Social Work also deals with complex and controversial issues. These issues may be challenging and uncomfortable, and it would be impossible to offer a substantive classroom experience that did not include potentially difficult conversations relating to challenging issues. In this environment, we will be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometimes we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. Nevertheless, the professor requires that students engage one another with civility, respect, and professionalism.

**Classroom Confidentiality.** Information shared in class about agencies, clients, and personal matters is considered confidential per the NASW Code of Ethics on educational supervision and is protected by regulations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as well. As such, sharing this information with individuals outside of the educational context is not permitted. Violations of confidentiality could result in actions taken according to the policies and procedure for review of academic performance located in sections 3.0, 3.1, and 3.2 of the Standards for Social Work Education.

**Unanticipated Distress.** Students may experience unexpected and/or distressing reactions to course readings, videos, conversations, and assignments. If so, students are encouraged to inform the professor. The professor can be responsive and supportive regarding students' participation in course assignments and activities, but students are responsible for communicating clearly what kind of support is desired. If counseling is needed, students may contact a service provider of their choosing, including the UT

Counseling and Mental Health Center at 512-471-3515 or online at <https://cmhc.utexas.edu/>.

**Policy on Social Media and Professional Communication.** Public social networks are not private. Even when open only to approved or invited members, users cannot be certain that privacy will exist among the general membership of sites. If social work students choose to participate in such forums, please assume that anything posted can be seen, read, and critiqued. What is said, posted, linked to, commented on, uploaded, subscribed to, etc., can be accessed and archived, posing potential harm to professional reputations and prospective careers.

Social work students who use social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) and other forms of electronic communication (e.g. blogs) must be mindful of how their communication may be perceived by clients, colleagues, faculty, and others. Social work students are expected to make every effort to minimize material which could be considered inappropriate for a professional social worker in training. Because of this, social work students are advised to manage security settings at their most private levels and avoid posting information/photos or using any language that could jeopardize their professional image.

Students are asked to consider the amount of personal information posted on these sites and are obliged to block any client access to involvement in the students' social networks. Client material should not be referred to in any form of electronic media, including *any* information that might lead to the identification of a client or compromise client confidentiality in *any* way. Additionally, students must critically evaluate any material that is posted regarding community agencies and professional relationships, as certain material could violate the standards set by the School of Social Work, the Texas Code of Conduct for Social Workers, and/or the NASW Code of Ethics.

Social work students should consider that they will be representing professional social work practice as well as The University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work program while in the classroom, the university community, and the broader area communities.

## **Resources, Prevention of Discrimination, and Safety**

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**Disability Accommodation Statement.** If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Disability and Access (D&A). You may refer to D&A's website for contact and more information: <https://community.utexas.edu/disability/>. If you are already registered with D&A, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and how they apply in my class.

**Behavior Concerns and Covid-19 Advice Line (BCCAL).** If students have concerns about their behavioral health, or if they are concerned about the behavioral health of someone else, students may use the Behavior Concerns and COVID-19 Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns. This service is provided through a partnership between the Office of

the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <https://safety.utexas.edu/behavior-concerns-advice-line>. The Behavior Concerns and COVID-19 Advice Line has been expanded to support The University of Texas at Austin community during the COVID-19 pandemic. By calling 512-232-5050 - Option 2 for COVID-19, students, faculty and staff can be assisted in English and Spanish with COVID-19 support.

**Covid-19 Related Information.** The University's policies and practices related to the pandemic may be accessed at: <https://protect.utexas.edu/>

**Title IX Reporting.** In accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the University of Texas at Austin is committed to maintaining a learning environment that is free from discriminatory conduct on the basis of sex <https://titleix.utexas.edu/>. Faculty, field instructors, staff, and/or teaching assistants in their supervisory roles are mandated reporters of incidents of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual violence, stalking, dating violence, or any other forms of sexual misconduct. Students who report such incidents will be informed of University resources. Incidents will be reported to the University's Title IX Coordinator. Further information, including student resources related to Title IX, may also be found at <https://titleix.utexas.edu/>.

**Title IX Accommodations for Those Pregnant, Nursing and Parenting.** Pregnant, nursing and parenting students, faculty, and staff are eligible for accommodations through the Title IX Office that support equal access to education and work and prevent discrimination. Students may reach out to the Title IX Office for help with accommodations to make up missed classes, complete missed coursework, keep them safe in the classroom, apply for leaves of absence, receive priority registration and other related support. Faculty and staff, including undergraduate students who work on campus and graduate student employees, may reach out for assistance with job or schedule restructuring and obtaining modified or additional work equipment. Visit the [Title IX pregnancy and parenting resource page](#) for more information or contact the [Title IX Support and Resources team](#) connect with a Case Manager.

**Campus Carry Policy.** The University's policy on campus carry may be found here: <https://campuscarry.utexas.edu>.

**Safety.** As part of professional social work education, students may have assignments that involve working in agency settings and/or the community. As such, these assignments may present some risks. Sound choices and caution may lower risks inherent to the profession. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and adhere to policies and practices related to agency and/or community safety. Students should notify the professor regarding any safety concerns.

**Emergency Evacuation Policy.** Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors in the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.

- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform the professor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the professor's instructions.
- Do not re-enter a building unless you are given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

## IX. Course Schedule

**SEEJ** = Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice Textbook by Benner, et. (2022)  
 Course Schedule is subject to change by the Professor. Students will be notified of changes promptly.

Date:	Topic	Readings & Resources	Assignments Due
June 9th	<b>Semester Overview</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group Expectations</li> <li>• NASW Code of Ethics</li> <li>• SB 17</li> </ul>	Course Module in Canvas	
June 11th	<b>Frameworks and Theories</b>	SEEJ, Chapters 1-3	
June 16th	<b>Systems of Oppression</b>	SEEJ Chapter 13	
June 18th	<b>Racial Justice</b>	SEEJ, Chapters 6	
June 23rd	<b>Economic Justice &amp; Environmental Justice</b>	SEEJ, Chapter 4 & 9	<b>Social Identity Map</b>
June 25th	<b>Disability Justice</b>	SEEJ, Chapter 7 & 8	Seminar Facilitation #1
June 30th	<b>Immigrant Rights</b>	Modules in Canvas	Seminar Facilitation #2
July 2nd	Community Field Trips		
July 7th	Community Field Trips		
July 9th	<b>Harm Reduction &amp; Incarceration</b>		Seminar Facilitation #3

July 14th	<b>LGBTQIA+ Justice</b>	See Modules in Canvas	Seminar Facilitation #4 <b>Community Reflection due</b>
July 16th	<b>Reproductive Justice</b>	See Modules in Canvas	Seminar facilitation #5
July 21st	<b>Healing Justice &amp; Community Organizing</b>	See Modules in Canvas	
July 23rd	<b>Justice For All Presentations</b>		<b>Justice For ALL Presentations</b>
July 28th	Final Share!		Reading Reflection

## **X. BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

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